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SUBJECT: GEORGIA: PRESIDENT SAKASHVILI'S TO-DO LIST AT UNGA

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires a.i. Kent Logsdon for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary. Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili will be looking closely for evidence of any change in U.S. policy toward Georgia when he meets with the Secretary on the margins of the UNGA. According to several key presidential advisors, Saakashvili will seek reassurance at the highest levels that the United States remains committed to supporting Georgia's territorial integrity as well as its aspirations to join trans-Atlantic institutions. Also on Saakashvili's mind will be continuing threats from Russia, Georgia's approach to dealing with Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and his 2008 pledge for a second wave of democratic reforms. President Saakashvili will likely raise Georgia's continued need for U.S. financial assistance and may request an opportunity for a phone call with the President. End Summary.

MISHA'S MINDSET - CONCERN ABOUT RUSSIA AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY KEY

12. (C) In past weeks and during EUR DAS Kaidanow's September 14-15 visit to Tbilisi, key advisors to President Saakashvili have given us clues as to what he plans to raise with the Secretary when they meet on the margins of UNGA. As this is the Secretary's first meeting with President Saakashvili, he will certainly seek her commitment to Georgia's territorial integrity. The Strategic Partnership Council, which met in June in Washington, and the Vice President's visit to Tbilisi in July have convinced Saakashvili of the Administration's commitment to Georgia's sovereignty and independence. We anticipate that Saakashvili will stress that the Georgian Government is committed to participating in international peacekeeping operations and was pleased that its offer of a battalion to support international efforts in Afghanistan was accepted. U.S. Marines began conducting training at a military base outside of Tbilisi on September 1; the deployment of the battalion to Afghanistan is expected to take place in March 2010. He may also mention that he is making progress in his democratic reform program, announced during the 2008 UNGA meeting.

13. (C) Georgia achieved a small victory with the passage of its UN General Assembly resolution supporting the right of return of IDPs on September 9, and President Saakashvili would like to see the UN and Geneva talks push forward on this point. However, the step backward with Hugo Chavez's September 10 announcement in Moscow that Venezuela intends to recognize the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia has led to Georgian fears of what FM Vashadze termed a possible "cascade of new recognitions." The Georgian Government is engaged now in drafting a strategy for engagement with the occupied territories and the USG is providing some assistance in supporting this work.

14. (C) Russia is always present on President Saakashvili's mind. More than a year after war with Russia, Georgia continues to experience instability along the administrative boundary lines with the separatist territories, with more than a dozen Georgian policemen killed in the past twelve months. Georgia's decision to detain and seize in

international waters several ships bound to and from ports in Abkhazia caused worry about a new round of provocative actions. However, despite recent belligerent rhetoric from the separatists in Sukhumi about Georgia's actions, Georgia's legal team is working with U.S. lawyers to help find a way forward to prevent provocative incidents while helping Georgia find a way to better understand its rights and obligations to its territorial waters. Georgia, for its part, has argued that these actions were taken to send a warning to Turkey to rein its commercial shipping companies and to insist that Turkish ships fulfill Georgian legal requirements before trading with Abkhazia.

ALSO ON THE AGENDA: NATO, BELARUS AND BUDGET SUPPORT

15. (C) FM Vashadze has indicated that President Saakashvili will seek the Secretary's thoughts on the way forward for Georgia with NATO. Saakashvili is seeking "straight talk" from us: how committed is the Administration to Georgia's NATO aspirations and what is a reasonable timeline? He will seek specific guidance on whether the United States views MAP on the only avenue to membership or whether there is an alternate route for Georgia. Possible NATO plans to give Montenegro a MAP make the Georgians nervous that they are being passed by again.

16. (C) President Saakashvili is increasingly concerned about the potential for Belarus to recognize the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Saakashvili believes there is still an opportunity to weigh in with Minsk to discourage this step. The Georgian President told DAS Kaidanow on September 15 that, if Belarus decides to recognize, and the

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EU does not ask Belarus to leave the Eastern Partnership, then Georgia will have to consider withdrawing itself because it can not be a part of this initiative with a "hostile nation." DAS Kaidanow urged the President to see the long-term consequences of distancing Georgia, by choice, from Europe. In the bigger picture, the Georgians are seeking our help to discourage a range of countries which are vulnerable to Russian pressure on recognition. Georgia's National Security Secretary told us that she understands that the United States may not be influential with all these countries, but she is concerned that a lack of effort cedes the field to the Russians.

17. (C) The FM predicted that Saakashvili will raise the importance of continued USG financial assistance to support Georgia's economy -- expected to shrink this year by four percent. He may repeat the request he made to the Vice President for USD 300 million to assist with IDP housing and the general budget deficit. Our message has been clear that no further budget support should be expected. We hope to provide some assistance from the USD 1 billion assistance package to help Georgia deal with the "old" caseload of IDPs from Abkhazia who have been resident, often in difficult conditions, in cities throughout Georgia for the past 15 years.

18. (C) Saakashvili may also renew his request for a telephone conversation with the President. He told DAS Kaidanow that he looked forward to his meeting with the Secretary and was grateful for the ongoing contact with the Vice President. In addition, Saakashvili would also like to develop a personal relationship with the President and may ask the Secretary for her assistance in facilitating communication.

LOGSDON